

Serial No.: 10/717,630
Atty. Docket No.: P68978US0

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for processing ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate polymers into pellets using an apparatus including an underwater pelletizer and a dryer, which comprises said method comprising:

extruding strands of ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate polymer through a die plate for cutting in into an said underwater pelletizer;

cutting the ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate polymer strands into pellets in a cutting chamber of said pelletizer;

transporting said ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate pellets out of said ~~pelletizer~~ cutting chamber to ~~a~~ said dryer using as a water ~~stream,~~ and pellet slurry; and

injecting a high velocity gas into said water ~~stream~~ and pellet slurry to generate a water vapor mist and enhance the speed of the pellets into and out of said dryer, with said pellets retaining sufficient internal heat upon exiting said dryer for to initiate crystallization of said pellets.

Serial No.: 10/717,630
Atty. Docket No.: P68978US0

2. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate pellets exiting said dryer are placed in a heat insulating container.

3. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate pellets exit said dryer at a mean temperature above about 135°C.

4. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 3 wherein said ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate pellets exit said dryer at a temperature above about 145°C.

5. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said step of transporting said ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate pellets out of said pelletizer to a said dryer includes ~~a substantially straight transporting said~~ slurry line ~~angled~~ upwardly at an angle from the vertical between 30° and 60°.

6. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 5 wherein said angle is about 45°.

Serial No.: 10/717,630
Atty. Docket No.: P68978US0

7. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said pressurized gas is air.

8. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said ~~pressurized~~ gas is injected into ~~said water stream~~ substantially in alignment with a flow direction of said water stream and pellet slurry.

Claims 9-15. (Canceled).

16. (Currently Amended) A method for processing ~~high temperature~~ crystallizing polymeric materials into pellets, which comprises:

extruding a ~~high temperature~~ crystallizing polymeric material into strands;

~~water cooling and~~ cutting the extruded strands into pellets in a water stream; and

transporting said pellets ~~using a~~ in said water stream as a water and pellet slurry; and

injecting an inert gas at a high velocity gas with into said pellet and water slurry such that said pellets retaining

Serial No.: 10/717,630
Atty. Docket No.: P68978US0

retain sufficient heat ~~to initiate~~ for crystallization of said polymeric material without the application of external heat.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16[[,]] wherein said material includes ~~PET~~ polyethylene terephthalate polymer.

18. (New) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said high velocity gas is injected at a flow rate of at least about 100 cubic meters per hour at a pressure of about 8 bar.

19. (New) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said vapor mist has a gas component of about 98% by volume.

20. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the gas injected into said slurry increases pellet flow speed from the pelletizer to an exit of said dryer to a rate of less than about one second.

21. (New) The method of claim 16 wherein the gas injected into said slurry increases pellet flow speed from a pelletizer at said step of extrusion to dryer exit to a rate of less than about one second.

Serial No.: 10/717,630
Atty. Docket No.: P68978US0

22. (New) The method of claim 16 wherein said polymeric material is a high temperature crystallizing polymeric material and said pellets are cooled in said water stream.

23. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein crystallization of said pellets occurs using only said internal heat retained from extrusion and in an absence of any secondary heating step while passing through said apparatus.

24. (New) A method for processing polyethylene terephthalate polymers into crystallized pellets using an apparatus having an underwater pelletizer and a centrifugal dryer, said method comprising:

cutting polyethylene terephthalate polymer strands into pellets in the underwater pelletizer;

transporting said pellets out of said pelletizer as a water and pellet slurry; and

introducing a high velocity inert gas into said water and pellet slurry to enhance the speed of said pellets through said centrifugal dryer located downstream of said gas introduction, said pellets exiting said dryer with sufficient internal heat for crystallization of said pellets.

Serial No.: 10/717,630
Atty. Docket No.: P68978US0

25. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the gas introduced into said slurry increases a speed of pellet flow from said pelletizer to an exit of said dryer to a rate of less than about one second.

26. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein said step of introducing a high velocity gas includes injecting said gas at a flow rate of about 100 cubic meters per hour at a pressure of about 8 bar.

27. (New) The method of claim 26 wherein said injected gas produces a water vapor mist having a gas component of about 98% by volume.

28. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein crystallization of said pellets occurs using only said internal heat retained from extrusion and in an absence of any secondary heating step while passing through said apparatus.